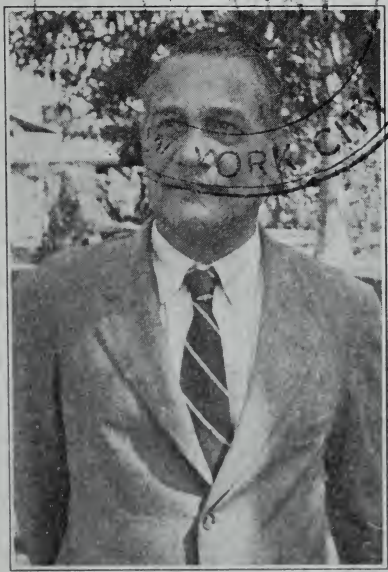


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OCT 16 1951

Honduras Invites Us



Don Ramón Guzmán
[1938 Photograph]

Board of International Missions

EVANGELICAL AND REFORMED CHURCH

1505 Race St.
Philadelphia, Pa.

1720 Chouteau Ave.
St. Louis, Mo.

THE AMBASSADOR

A July afternoon, 1917, was drawing to its close in our capital city.

The pastor of Concordia church, hat in hand, ready for a belated call in the suburbs, was detained, when the doorbell rang. He opened. A tall, well-built man with swarthy complexion and strong features, evidently not a North American, looked into his face. "Are you—pastor—of this church?" The manner of utterance betrayed a limited familiarity with English. "Yes, and what can I do for you?" "I will ask—will you send missionary—to my country?"

The pastor gave a quick searching glance. Was this another foreigner desiring to speak in his church under false pretenses, to gather a "collection for missions" and then to disappear, collection and all? Evidently some caution had to be exercised. "What country are you from?" "Honduras, Central America." "Friend, I'm in a great hurry to catch a train. Can you come back tomorrow?" "Yes, what time?" "O, at about nine o'clock."—"Bueno! Good-bye!"

Promptly the next morning the stranger returned. And he gave a satisfying account of himself as well as of his desire to have "a missionary sent to my country."



AT WASHINGTON

His name was Ramón Guzmán. Born in Southern Honduras, Nacaome, his father, an attorney-at-law, had given him as good a training as the country offered. And Don Ramón at the time held the position of a bookkeeper in a mercantile establishment of Tegucigalpa, the Honduran capital. He expected to spend some three months in Washington in the pursuit of patent rights on a code invention. The rooms he had engaged were but two city blocks away. Seeing our church and parsonage he thought of the spiritual destitution of his country. This church which he passed several times a day, being a Gospel church, surely must have the missionary spirit. Why not utilize his visit in the United States, and seek to increase the Gospel forces in Honduras? And so, with the impulsiveness characteristic to his people, he had ascended the iron stairway leading to the parsonage, had rung the bell, and stammered the request recorded above.

The first visit was followed by numerous others. Suspicion gave way to confidence which in turn ripened into warm personal regard. Don Ramón evidently was a man who had come to love the Lord and feed on His word. His father had only known a lifeless, superstitious Romanism, had brought up his son



with contempt for a religion of that sort, thus unwittingly leaving the son's heart unfortified against the temptations of the world. But the Lord had been merciful to the young man. The Central American Mission had been led to open work in Tegucigalpa about 1914. Don Ramón, through his desire to learn English, had gotten in touch with the missionary, and in turn was touched by the renewing power of the Spirit. Learning to speak English he had, still more, learned to praise the God of his salvation, and to long for the salvation of his countrymen.

"Laborers in the Honduran harvest,"—this was his oft repeated plea during those visits at the Washington parsonage. He told of the natural beauty of his country, but still more of the scarcely five or six evangelical witnesses living there at the time; of spiritual needs, spiritual opportunities. "Can you not send more missionaries?" "Can you not come to Honduras? Please do!"

The visits apparently ended with his return to his home country in October. But they were one link in a chain which has since lengthened and bound us in close ties to Honduras. The next link consisted in correspondence; the next in deliberations with the Foreign Mission Board on the Honduran plea. That led to accounts in our church papers; that to encouraging money gifts by various friends; that to a tour of investigation by our Rev. Fr. Frankenfeld and the Mission Secretary, Dr. Paul A. Menzel in 1919; and that to the arrival of our first missionary, the Rev. H. A. Dewald, in San Pedro, January 1st, 1920. And that marked the definite occupation of Honduras, by our Evangelical and Reformed Church, through God's grace.

Since 1920 Mr. Guzmán served for awhile as deputy in the Honduran national congress, then as private secretary to the President. At present he is preaching the Gospel in the Republic of Guatemala. But he was an ambassador to our former Foreign Mission Board's Office at Washington, D. C., sent by Him, "Who would have all men saved and come to the knowledge of Truth."

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